

**District Review Report
Final**

**School District No. 50
(Haida Gwaii/Queen Charlotte)**

April 28 - 30, 2003

Submitted to the Minister of Education

**By District Review Team Chair
Bob Peacock, Superintendent SD No. 58 (Nicola-Similkameen)**

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District Name: Haida Gwaii/Queen Charlotte

District Number: 50

Superintendent: Michael Woods

Date of Visit: April 27 to April 30, 2003

Team Chair: Bob Peacock, Superintendent, School District No. 58 (Nicola-Similkameen)

Team Members: John Chenoweth, District Principal First Nations, Nicola Similkameen; De De DeRose, Principal, Kamloops/Thompson; Ann Garside, Ministry of Education; Trish Rosborough, Ministry of Education; Debi Russell, Teacher, Coast Mountain; Lori Tedrick, Parent, Rocky Mountain.

Context

The Review Team recognizes the opportunistic and challenging conditions which the Haida Gwaii/Queen Charlotte School District has faced, and which, directly and indirectly impact student achievement. Opportunities include the rich language, culture and history of the Haida people, and other unique community resources. Some challenges involve the retention of personnel, including the position of Superintendent of Schools, and the isolated location of the district. These impact upon the educational leadership within the district and provision of professional development opportunities.

Summary of Process

In conjunction with each of the sixty school districts throughout the province, improving student achievement for ALL students is the primary goal established by the Ministry of Education. The district review process reflects the commitment of the various educational partners to work cooperatively to ensure that optimum levels of student performance are achieved and to be publicly accountable for student results.

The Haida Gwaii/Queen Charlotte School District is one of twenty school district reviews being undertaken in the 2002/2003 school year. The purpose of the review is to provide feedback and recommendations to the host district, the Ministry of Education and the public regarding the district's work in improving student achievement by:

- reviewing district and school achievement data;
- reviewing the district accountability contract and school plans to improve student achievement;
- making recommendations to the board and to the Minister about improving student achievement; and

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- identifying promising practices that will assist other districts and schools in their efforts to improve student achievement.

The Review Team, in addressing the above purposes, reviewed the following:

- the draft copy of the Local Education Agreement;
- the District Accountability Contract;
- School Plans for all but one of the schools in the district;
- progress of the school district and schools in meeting their goals and performance targets;
- strategies employed at the school and district levels used to support their goals and performance targets; and
- various materials provided by school staff as examples of work that they are doing to achieve their school goals.

Initially the Review Team met with the district's leadership team to discuss the district's Accountability Contract, services, programs, practices, and results. Subsequent visits to each school provided opportunity for discussions related to the ten key points of inquiry, which form the structure of the review process. In each school the Review Team met with a focus group, typically made up of the school's administration and representatives of the teachers, parents and support staff. The Team also met separately with a group representing the Haida communities who spoke very passionately about the importance of education for their children and their willingness to work with the school district.

The Review Team visited all six schools in the district, which includes:

A. L. Mathers Elementary Junior Secondary
Queen Charlotte Secondary
Sk'aadgaa Elementary
Port Clements Elementary
Tahayghen Elementary
George M. Dawson Secondary

At the conclusion of its visit the Review Team met with the school district's senior administration and Board of Trustees to present a summary of this report. The Review Team would like to extend their appreciation to all members of the Haida Gwaii/Queen Charlotte educational community for their hospitality and involvement in this process.

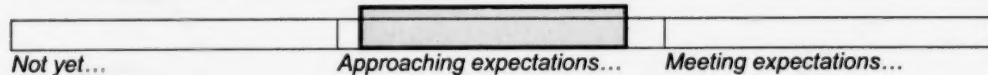
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Observations in Key Areas - Focus on Student Achievement

1. Goals:

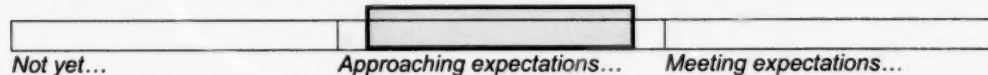
Improving districts have a strong instructional focus. This focus is made visible in clear goals for improving student learning.



- The majority of schools have developed goals that are specific and that reflect district goals and that allow for the uniqueness of each school.
- The Review Team strongly supports the district's primary goal of improving the academic and social success for Haida students. However, the evidence supports the need to more specifically address Haida student achievement within the goals of most schools.
- The Review Team encourages the district to address the male/female disparity in achievement.

2. Rationale:

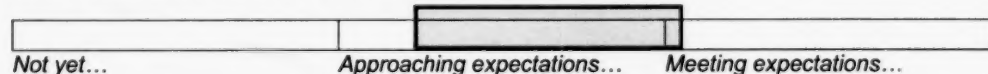
Improving districts have a thorough and connected set of reasons based on evidence for the selection of their student achievement goals.



- The rationales for school goals are clearly stated in the reviewed plans.
- The Review Team recommends that the district expand its database to include locally developed data sources.
- The district is encouraged to further include the Haida community in its planning processes through the Haida Education Council.

3. Data:

Improving districts are actively considering at least three sources of evidence including classroom, school and district / provincial data. The analysis of this evidence has informed the selection of the district goals.



- The Review Team recognizes the emergent practices at schools in collecting and analyzing data.
- The district is encouraged to expand their data beyond ministry sources to include the local classroom, school, and community sources.

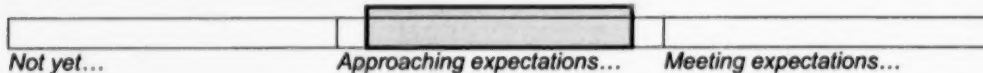
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- The Review Team encourages the district to collaborate with educators, parents, and the Haida Education Council in collecting, interpreting, and using data.

4. Strategies:

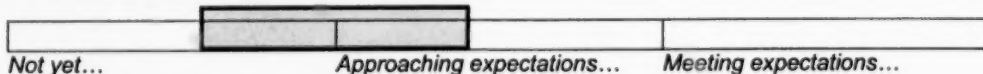
Improving districts have a well-organized, focused improvement plan in place. The strategies selected to achieve the goals are an intelligent blend of research, best practice, and innovative thinking.



- The district identifies and is using a variety of strategies to improve student learning including lower class sizes; the consideration of common district professional development days; and the planned implementation of a numeracy helping teacher.
- In school visits the Review Team saw evidence of focused strategies, notably in the areas of literacy (helping teacher) and social responsibility (Effective Behaviour Support).
- There is a need to clearly articulate the linkages among the strategies, and between the strategies and their goals.
- Individually, schools use a variety of strategies. To enhance collegiality, the Review Team encourages schools to regularly share their strategies.

5. Structures:

Improving districts have aligned structures – resources, time, and organizations – to get the results they want. This includes effectively differentiating resources in the areas of highest need for improvement.



- The Review Team recognizes the following structural changes that support student learning: the Electronic School, the restructuring of the district resource centre, the creation of a double literacy block in secondary schools, and the planned implementation of the helping teachers in the areas of literacy and numeracy.
- The structure for providing special education support at the school level needs to be examined and restructured.
- Personnel hired through Aboriginal targeted funding (Director of Education, Home School Coordinators, Haida Language Teachers) need to have their roles and duties clarified and supported to ensure district-wide continuity.
- The Review Team strongly encourages structures that will build and strengthen district unity such as the assignment of a district wide helping teacher in the area of literacy and a separate district wide helping teacher in the area of numeracy.

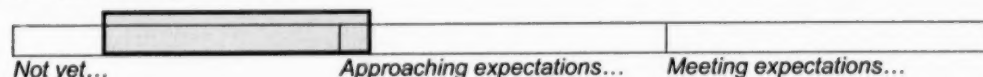
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- The Review Team recognizes the positive educational impacts that can be achieved with a strong relationship between the Haida communities and the school district. The district is encouraged to build upon this relationship.

6. Results:

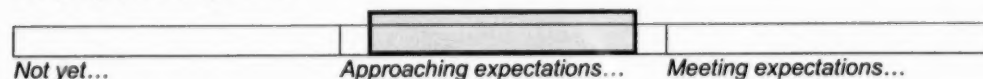
Improving districts get improved student learning results – at the classroom, school and district levels.



- In the district and a number of schools there is evidence of progress in establishing baseline data, particularly in the areas of literacy and social responsibility, and some evidence that performance trends are being established.
- The district needs to guide and support schools in identifying sources of data for measuring and tracking results. The Review Team recognizes that some sources of data (FSA) may be skewed due to the small number of students being assessed.

7. Communication:

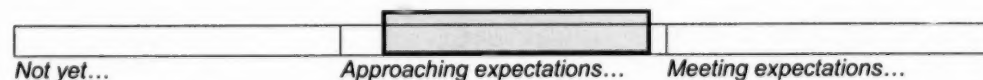
Improving districts communicate and make public their improvement goals and the progress being made.



- There is some evidence that once the goals are established the district and schools communicate those goals to the public.
- The Review Team encourages the district to continue seeking vehicles for public input to provide feedback during the developmental stage.

8. Teamwork: District and School Coherence

Improving districts have a dynamic and interactive strategy for connecting school and district goals. School uniqueness and school district directions are both valued.



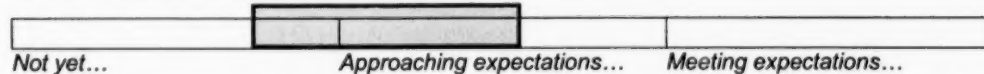
- The Review Team recognizes that, historically, school and district planning was loosely connected; schools operated independently. Evidence suggests that this is changing. The Review Team observed some alignment between district and school goals. Continued work on a shared vision will contribute to a strong sense of teamwork.

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9. Teamwork: District and Parent Involvement

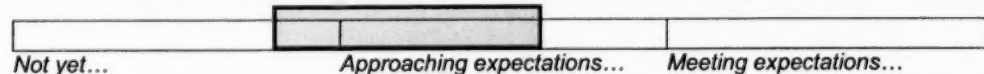
Improving districts work as a team with parents, including specific groups of parents, on improving student learning.



- The Review Team recognizes the effort being made by the superintendent in initiating a teamwork approach.
- The district needs to involve parents as full partners in all aspects of the decision making process related to student achievement.
- The district and schools need to recognize and celebrate the variety of contributions made by parents. All levels of involvement are integral to student achievement.
- Student achievement is greatly influenced by the leadership provided at the school and district level. All partner groups need to be involved in the hiring process of those leaders.
- Situated within the traditional territories of the Haida, the district needs to establish "true" partnerships with the Haida people in all discussions related to education.

10. Leadership / Teamwork:

Improving districts are led by district leaders with a clear vision for and commitment to school improvement and improving student achievement. Principals, vice principals, teacher, parent and student leadership is encouraged and systematically developed – with a focus on improving student learning.



- The Review Team recognizes that the district is lead by a superintendent who is aware of the strengths and opportunities within the district and is making a concerted effort to convert opportunities into strengths.
- Historically, schools have operated in isolation. Therefore, a focussed effort will be required of schools to build trust and establish relationships with the entire educational community.

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Strengths

The Review Team recognizes the following strengths:

- Educators who are student focussed and passionate about teaching;
- The ability to seek out and access external resources (Gwaii Trust, Early Development Instrument, YMCA Youth Exchange Program, Industry Canada, Digital Culture Photo Exchange);
- The establishment of the Haida Education Council;
- The district's commitment to keeping class sizes low, yet flexible, to meet the needs of all students;
- The willingness of the Haida people to work with the school district in a respectful manner to ensure school success for all students;
- Access to a UNESCO World Heritage Site as a classroom.

Promising Practices

The Review Team recognizes the following promising practices:

- Establishment of a literacy program that includes the hiring of a literacy helping teacher;
- Commitment to hiring a numeracy helping teacher;
- The inclusion of Band School personnel in the district's professional development and other related activities.
- The innovative variety of ways through which parents and the community are kept informed;
- Providing innovative educational opportunities through electronic school, continuing adult education programs, and the grandparent reading program;
- The support provided by Gwaii Trust;
- The Effective Behavior Support Program;
- District wide art day;
- Off-island college tours for grade 10 students;
- A wide variety of extra-curricular activities provided to the students both within district and off-island.

Recommendations

- Situated within the traditional territories of the Haida, the district needs to establish "true" partnerships with the Haida people in all discussions related to education.
- Although the goals are clear and specific the number of goals/sub-goals need to be reduced.
- Inter-school/community relationships need to be enhanced through district-focused programs, professional development, team building, and specialized staff.

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- The disparity of achievement levels between female and male students needs to be examined.
- All partner groups need to be informed of and involved in the hiring process of district and school leaders.
- The district is encouraged to examine and consider the strong structural elements developed through the emergence of Gwaii Trust.

Conclusion

The Review Team believes that one of the greatest challenges facing the school district also offers its greatest strength. In particular, the isolated location of the district should be used to strengthen and bond the education communities. When accepting a position of special responsibility, all employees, including Trustees, must ensure that the voices of all people are heard and considered before a decision is made. The Review Team believes that the current district staff needs the presence of a strong Haida voice to guide the process and explain the protocol. There is no reason for any group to feel marginalized and not listened to.

*People are like trees, and groups of people are like the forests.
While the forests are composed of many different kinds of trees,
these trees intertwine their roots so strongly that it is impossible for the
strongest winds which blow on our islands to uproot the forest,
and their roots are inextricably intertwined.*

*In the same way the people of our islands,
composed of members of nations and races from all over the world,
are beginning to intertwine their roots so strongly that no troubles will affect
them.*

*Just as one tree standing alone would soon be destroyed by
the first strong wind which came along,
so it is impossible for any person, any family, or any community to stand
alone against the troubles of this world.*

*Chief Skidegate – Lewis Collinson (1966)
As presented in the Haida presentation (2003)*

